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Harris County Public Health

Building a Healthy Community

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Food Safety after a Power Outage for Food Establishments

Food in refrigerators

- Throw out any perishable food (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, leftovers) if the power to the refrigerator has been off for 4 or more hours.

Food in freezers

- If the door remains closed, a full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours - a half full freezer will keep temperature for about 24 hours.
- If the freezer thermometer reads 41° F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen. If there is no thermometer, check each package of food. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 41 °F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook. Refreezing of these foods will be a quality (not food safety) issue.

Disposal of food

- Liquids (excluding fats, oils and grease) – pour down the drain. Caution: there is the possibility that you will experience sewage back up if your establishment does not have power.
- Fats, oils and grease – place in approved grease disposal bins or place in closed containers and contact grease disposal facility for pick-up.
- Small quantities of food – denature with a cleaning product such as bleach and place in covered refuse bin outside the facility. If garbage pick-up is greatly delayed, place perishable food in closed containers, clearly label “not for sale” and place in a refrigerated location separate from other food until proper disposal is possible.
- Large quantities of food – store in covered refuse containers in a secure location until proper disposal is possible
- Massive quantities of food – take to Type 1 landfill.

Type 1 Landfills

Landfill	Company	Address	County
McCarty Road	Allied	5757 A Oates	Harris
Atascocita	Waste Management	3623 Wilson Rd.	Harris
Blue Ridge	Allied	2200 FM 521	Fort Bend
Baytown	Waste Management	FM 1405, just north of FM 2354	Chambers
Security	Waste Management	19248 Hwy 105	Montgomery

Water

- Until a city or municipal utility district declares its water safe, only bottled water or water that has come to a rolling boil for one minute should be used. Boiled or bottled washing should be used for food preparation, drinking and washing hands.
- Use single service utensils and tableware or use approved sanitizer in approved concentration to sanitize dishes after washing and rinsing. (1/3 cup bleach to 5 gallons water) Sequence should be wash-rinse-sanitize. Heat sanitizing dish machines should not be used unless the sanitizing temperature reaches boiling (212°F.)

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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Ice

- Establishments that are under a “boil water” notice should not make ice.
- Purchase packaged ice from an approved source.
- Discard any stored ice. Clean and sanitize ice machine according to the manufacturer’s recommended procedures.

When may I re-open?

- Food establishments may resume operation if they meet the following conditions:
- Time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, etc.) that have not been held at 41°F or less is properly discarded.
- Full power is restored.
- Hot and cold running water is restored and is at sufficient pressure to wash hands and clean and sanitize equipment effectively
- Toilet facilities are operating properly.
- The establishment does not have structural damage that will cause contamination of food or food contact surfaces and equipment.

If you wish to resume food operations, but these conditions are not fully met, please consult Harris County Public Health (HCPH) at (713) 274-6300. Partial operation may be possible.

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